

# DuPage County Health Department

Flu Hotline

(630) 588-3910 (recorded message)

[www.dupagehealth.org](http://www.dupagehealth.org)

## PREVENTING THE FLU

**Current Information**

**2004 - 2005**

### WHO SHOULD GET THE AVAILABLE FLU VACCINE?

Due to a nationwide shortage of available flu vaccine this year, the following priority groups are recommended to get a flu shot this season:

- Children 6 - 23 months of age.
- Adults 65 years of age and older.
- Persons 2 - 64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions.
- Pregnant women or women who will be pregnant during the flu season.
- Residents of nursing homes/long-term care facilities.
- Children 6 months to 18 years receiving long-term aspirin therapy.
- Health care workers providing direct patient care.
- Caregivers and household contacts of children less than 6 months.

Persons in groups identified above should search locally for vaccine if their regular health care provider does not have vaccine available.

**Persons who are not included in one of the priority groups described above are asked to defer or perhaps forego getting a flu shot.**

### WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO HELP PREVENT CATCHING THE FLU?

There are several basic steps you can take to help avoid catching the flu:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based handrub.
- Maintain a strong immune system by getting plenty of sleep, eating well and drinking lots of liquids.
- Health care workers and caregivers are encouraged to use a nasal mist known as FluMist, which can be given to healthy individuals 5 to 49 years of age. However, direct care workers who care for immunocompromised patients in special care units should not get this alternative protection.

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET THE FLU?

There is no cure for the flu, but antiviral treatment may lessen symptoms if started soon enough. If symptoms are severe, hospitalization may be required.

- Call your doctor within 24 hours of starting symptoms.
- Stay home for 5 - 7 days after symptoms begin. Children should be kept home at least one week after symptoms begin.
- Take over-the-counter medications for symptom relief. Children and teens should not take aspirin.

### HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE FLU?

The flu is spread when a person who has the flu coughs, sneezes or speaks and sends the flu virus into the air and other people inhale the virus. It can be spread when a person touches a surface that has the flu virus on it.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based handrub.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of immediately.
- Remind other people to cover their mouths and use disposable tissues when coughing or sneezing.

*"We promote health, prevent illness and provide quality service."*